I rise today to congratulate the Armenian Assembly’s 2018 Distinguished Humanitarian Award honoree, Ms. Annie Simonian Totah.

For over forty years, Ms. Totah has been a leading defender of human rights and a vocal advocate of Armenia, Artsakh and the Armenian-American community. Ms. Totah was the first woman to serve as Chair of the Armenian Assembly of America and she remains an effective spokesperson for Armenian issues on Capitol Hill. Her life as a community leader and activist has truly been a journey of dedication.

I have known Annie throughout my entire congressional career and I can say without hesitation that Annie’s passion, dedication and commitment to Armenia and Artsakh is unparalleled. Since the demise of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Annie has worked tirelessly with Members of Congress to help secure billions of dollars in assistance to Armenia. Her contributions with the Armenian Assembly have included efforts that saw the enactment of several pieces of legislation and Missions to Armenia that have raised awareness and understanding of key issues.

Ms. Totah helped mobilize relief efforts to provide temporary shelters for the homeless victims of the 1988 earthquake in Armenia, and collaborated with the Marshall Legacy Institute to help launch the “Mine Detection Dog-Partnership” program in Armenia. Annie was also involved early on in the creation of the U.S.-Armenia Task Force for Economic Cooperation, and continues to encourage trade and investment between the two countries.
Ms. Totah is the recipient of many honors and awards, including: The Ellis Island Medal of Honor; Medal of Appreciation by the President of Artsakh; and the Encyclical of Gratitude and Appreciation by His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the Annie Totah and the Armenian Assembly on this occasion and for its powerful voice and professionalism that has truly made a difference.